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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [MOPS](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)  
SUBJECT: RFG: NATO-RUSSIA: A PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

Classified By: Ambassador Kurt Volker. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) This is a request for guidance for a September 2 NATO PermReps informal discussion of the way ahead on NATO-Russia.  
See paragraph 13.

¶2. (S) SUMMARY: On September 2, NATO PermReps will discuss how to take forward the August 19 Foreign Ministerial decision that it is not "business as usual" in the NATO-Russia relationship. In light of the Russian recognition of independence for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, we believe we must take an even harder line than was taken at the ministerial. We request that Washington instruct us to propose the suspension of the "at 27" relationship, while maintaining channels of communication with Russia via the "26 plus 1" mechanisms found in the Partnership for Peace/Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council mechanisms. We also urge the suspension of most NATO-Russia specific activities, excepting a limited number that meet our larger interests -- such as those related to the war in Afghanistan. Additionally, we request guidance instructing us to raise several points related to NATO's assistance to Georgia, the NATO-Georgia Commission, and the Alliance's need to take steps to reconfirm its Article 5 commitments. END SUMMARY.

The Issue  
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¶3. (S) At their September 2 lunch, NATO PermReps will discuss how to implement the August 19 Foreign Ministerial decision that it is not "business as usual" in the NATO-Russia relationship. Allies have had very different opinions on what exactly this means. In light of the Russian recognition of South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence, we must forge an Allied consensus for firm actions that reshape our engagement with Russia.

A Proposed Way Forward  
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¶4. (S) As a result of the Russian actions since the August 19 ministerial, we believe that we must use the September 2 meeting to call for an even tougher Allied stance against Russia than we did at the ministerial. We must also use the opportunity to lift Allied deliberations to a strategic discussion of how to shape our engagement with Russia, rather than focusing on bureaucratic or procedural issues. As a result, we suggest making the following proposal with regard to NATO-Russia relations:

-- We suspend the "at 27" special relationship that

defines the NRC, all procedural rules related to the NRC, and all "at 27" meetings until Russia implements the ceasefire and reverses its recognition of the two regions. No other partner of NATO--not even aspirants--have an "at 27" relationship. All other partnerships are in "26 plus 1" format. Russia has lost the right for this special status. This would mean blocking not only NRC meetings per se, but the Preparatory Committee and working group activities;

-- We identify activities and mechanisms that NATO is involved in that include Russia as only one of a number of partners and allow those activities to move forward. Russia should not be allowed to prevent us from doing the important work of the Alliance. Activities and meetings of the Partnership for Peace/Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (PfP/EAPC) are but one example of this. Russia remains a member of EAPC/PfP.

-- We identify a handful of NATO-Russia specific areas of practical cooperation (such as on Afghanistan, counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and humanitarian issues) that we will agree to allow to continue, suspending the rest. Special consideration would be given to areas of cooperation that support the Alliance's larger goals, as identified in the point above. Any committee work that is required on these issues will be done in a "26 plus 1" framework with Allied precoordination;

-- We call a special, one-off meeting at the Ambassadorial level to inform Russia of these decisions and to give Allies a chance to present a unified message of condemnation of Russian actions. Importantly, however, we do this in a "26 plus 1" meeting within the context of NATO's Partnership for Peace/Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (PfP/EAPC), instead of within the NRC framework. Use of this mechanism would show Allies that we do have an alternate to the NRC as a channel of communication with Russia. Moreover, since our meeting with Georgia at the start of the crisis was also a "26 plus 1" within the PfP/EAPC framework, we can argue that there is a logical balance to do it this way. (Note: We assess that there is a high likelihood that Russian Ambassador Rogozin would refuse to attend a meeting in this format.)

-- We leave open the possibility of additional 26 plus 1 meetings within the PfP/EAPC format, as needed.

-- We ask the NATO International Staff to remain engaged with the Russian Mission, keeping open an additional channel of communication.

15. (S) Gaining consensus on this proposal will not be easy and will likely require efforts by senior U.S. officials. Washington may wish to consider calling another extraordinary meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers to discuss the way ahead with NATO.

Other Issues to Raise in the PermReps Lunch

16. (S) In addition to the NATO-Russia specific points, we wish to use the September 2 lunch to make the following points on several related topics:

A) NATO's Aid to Georgia

-- NATO's assistance to Georgia should be value-added, taking into account U.S. bilateral assistance; and

-- NATO's contribution to the reconstitution of the Georgian military could include assistance and advice relating to the national military structure, airspace, leadership education and training, and command and control issues.

B) NATO-Georgia Commission

-- We support a short framework document, which should be agreed now;

- The Commission should oversee the process set in hand at Bcharest, as well as the implementation of the Alliace's assistance;
- The Commission should proide a framework for meetings at various levels, ncluding at ministerial and summit level;
- The Commission should include a mechanism for emergency consultations;
- We should hold a 26 plus 1 meeting with Georgia prior to the NAC visit to Tbilisi, confirming that the Private Office intends to schedule one for September 10;
- We should hold the first meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission during the NAC's September 15-16 visit to Tbilisi.

#### C) Reconfirming Our Article 5 Commitments

- The Alliance should begin contingency planning for the Baltic states;
- It should also develop permanent air policing options;
- We should conduct an Article 5 exercise in Central Europe, possibly Poland; and
- We should send high-level delegations to visit Allies bordering Russia.

#### Background

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¶6. (S) When NATO Foreign Ministers agreed at their August 19th meeting that there would be "no business as usual" in the NATO-Russia relationship (at least until Russia implements all elements of the ceasefire), Allies seemed to accept that there would be no Ambassadorial level meetings of the NATO-Russia Council. Allies remain divided, however, on how else we should operationalize the ministerial agreement.

¶7. (S) A significant number of Allies (and the International Staff), believe that the bi-monthly Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) should continue to meet because it is "required to" by the NATO-Russia Council's Rules of Procedure--which were agreed "at 27" by all NRC countries (i.e. the Allies and Russia working as co-equal partners). They also argue that the PrepCom remains our only channel of communication with Russia, something they desperately wish to hold on to. We, however, have argued that it makes no sense to hold a PrepCom meeting when there is no Ambassadorial meeting to prep, adding that political considerations should not be overcome by rules of procedure.

¶8. (S) Many Allies have also argued firmly that practical cooperation with Russia on a number of specific issues, particularly Afghanistan, should be allowed to continue because of the significant importance of these issues.

RFG

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¶9. (S) Request for guidance: We request Washington instruct us to deploy the proposal outlined in paras 4 and 6 above at the September 2 PermReps' lunch.

VOLKER